

Julia Brownley NEWS

41st Assembly District



AN ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER TO THE 41ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
(Including Agoura, Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Encino, Hidden Hills, Lake Sherwood, Malibu, Oak Park, Pacific Palisades, Port Hueneme, South Oxnard, Santa Monica, Tarzana, Topanga, Westlake Village and Woodland Hills)

DECEMBER 2008 YEAR END

A Year of Hellos and Goodbyes

• Welcome Wendy Notsinneh, my new Chief of Staff



Following the departure of Stephanie Burri, my Chief of Staff for the past two years who accepted a position as an advocate for the SEIU, I was very excited to be able to entice Wendy Notsinneh back to the Legislature. Wendy, a veteran Capitol staffer, served for the past two years as Chief, Office of Governmental Affairs for the California Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).

Prior to joining PERS, however, Wendy was Chief of Staff to Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg, overseeing a staff of 15 and managing legislative, political and constituent operations. She also managed legislative programs for Assemblymembers Johan Klehs, Susan Davis (now Congresswoman), and Senator Herschel Rosenthal. Her background and depth of expertise working on education issues and policy will be particularly valuable for my work as the new Chair of the Assembly Education Committee. I couldn't have hoped for more than to have Wendy Notsinneh now heading up my office staff.

• Welcome Back, Fran

As Sheila moves on, filling Senator Kuehl's shoes now is Fran Pavley, my predecessor in the Assembly from 2000 to 2006. It's hard to imagine anyone better qualified to seamlessly keep the work that Sheila began moving forward, especially in the areas of environmental protection and the need to provide quality and affordable health care for all Californians. Fran came to national and then international prominence with the passage of her two landmark bills, AB 1493 and AB 32, tackling climate change before it became a front page issue. I especially look forward to partnering with Fran, a former middle school teacher, on education reform and education finance issues.

• So Long and Thank You, Senator Sheila Kuehl!

On December 1, term limits ended the exceptional legislative career of one of Sacramento's finest – State Senator Sheila Kuehl. After six years in the State Assembly and eight years in the Senate with an impressive record of accomplishment, and



consistently being rated one of the most intelligent and ethical legislators in the Capitol on a bipartisan consensus, Sheila has well earned our thanks and praise. I had the pleasure of co-hosting a thank-you gathering for Sheila along with new State Senator Fran Pavley at King Gillette Ranch last month to specially recognize her legacy of saving and protecting thousands of acres of precious open space and natural resources in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation area. Beautiful place to send Sheila off to future adventures.

California's Budget Crisis

Last week, the Assembly and State Senate approved a combination of \$18 billion worth of deep cuts in state services plus new revenues to help address the state's fiscal emergency. These steps were absolutely essential to address California's immediate cash crisis and the enormous budget deficit that has been caused by the international financial meltdown.

These very serious steps were the result of months of intensive effort by the majority Democrats to achieve real solutions through consensus and bipartisanship. I very much regret that legislative Republicans have repeatedly refused to participate with us in addressing the fiscal emergency and have blocked every effort to address the problem. Californians cannot wait any longer for Republicans to take the budget crisis seriously. The time came for Democrats to act and to do as much as we could to save our state from financial disaster with majority votes that did not require Republican support.

In making the cuts we made – more than \$7 billion dollars – Democrats faced tough choices, cutting programs we came to Sacramento to protect. We had to raise revenues, too, but we did so in a way as to minimize the impact on working Californians and middle class families.

These were drastic and tough choices, but we did what we had to do to get our state through this crisis. Unfortunately, not everyone is showing that same degree of responsibility.

Minutes after we passed the \$18 billion in solutions, Governor Schwarzenegger held a press conference to say he could not support the solutions because they were not his solutions. I was stunned at the Governor's willingness to push California over a cliff when clearly he had not even had time to understand what the bills we passed actually do.

The Governor said we didn't include economic stimulus. In fact, the measures include \$3 billion worth of bond acceleration to get job-creating infrastructure projects moving for transportation, drought relief, park restoration and green technologies. We also expanded the availability of public-private partnerships that will bring new private investment in public works and spur new construction.

He said we didn't address environmental regulations he considers too restrictive, but we expedited the CEQA review process for transportation projects and surplus property and we eased restrictions for hospital construction.

All these actions by the legislative Democrats will help create jobs immediately.

On Wednesday, December 17, the state's three top financial officers stopped work on 2,000 infrastructure projects in the state worth over \$16 billion. These projects ground to a halt because of the unavailability of credit due to our budget emergency and cash shortage. In other words, these vital infrastructure projects stopped cold, and tens of thousands of jobs have been put at risk, because the Governor and the legislative Republicans have failed to act responsibly and to address this crisis seriously.

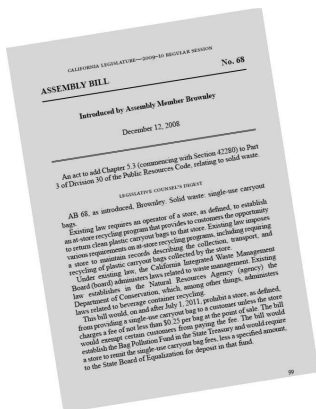
The Democratic majorities in the Assembly and Senate took a huge step toward solving the problem and putting people back to work with the \$18 billion package of solutions we passed. California's Treasurer warned on Thursday, December 18, that there would be disastrous consequences from Wall Street if Governor Schwarzenegger rejected the solutions that we passed.

I am surprised that that warning alone didn't give the Governor pause enough to thoughtfully consider bills that haven't even reached his desk.

The Governor's apparent haste would be a waste of \$18 billion in solutions that could help ease the pain Californians are suffering, put people to work, and help solve our cash crisis and our budget deficit.

The Governor claims that he still wants to negotiate, but then says everything must be exactly as he demands. That is not a negotiation, and it is not leadership. Given the direness of the crisis we face, I'm hoping the Governor took the chance to catch his breath over the weekend and will still take a closer look at the solutions we passed. I think he'll realize the great harm he would be doing by failing to sign these bills.

The legislature put \$18 billion of solutions and real economic stimulus in his hands. I can't believe he would squander that effort simply because he didn't get 100% of everything he wanted. If he doesn't come around and sign our bills, then we will be waiting anxiously to see what the next step will be from a Governor who has so far been consistently unable to produce even a single vote for any of his budget solutions.



Do you have a good bill idea?

Many bills that I carried last year came from constituents. If you have a bill idea that you believe would solve a state problem or that would benefit our state, please forward it to me at Assemblymember.Brownley@assembly.ca.gov.

Information needed would include what the current situation is, who is being impacted by the situation, whether steps have been taken in the past to correct it, and your suggestion as to how to make it better in a cost-effective and realistic manner. I'm reviewing all bill ideas right now, and welcome yours.

Expo Phase 2 Moving Full Speed Ahead

With the voters of Los Angeles County approving Measure R in November, the Expo Westside light rail line Phase 2 and many other vital transportation projects locally and regionally are now assured of the needed funding to become realities. Angelenos confirmed by their vote that investment in L.A.'s transit system is a priority, not only for riders, but for everyone in the region. Reducing traffic congestion, catching up on needed road improvements, cleaning the air, as well as creating a long-term, locally- controlled funding source are just a few of the benefits of L.A. County's Measure R half-cent sales tax.



Expo Phase 2 from Venice and Robertson in Culver City to Fourth Street in Santa Monica should begin construction in 2010, with rider service in 2014 or 2015. With the infusion of the Measure R funds, this project will now be funded solely by local and state dollars, expediting work by doing the work without the need for Federal funds or approvals. The draft environmental impact report will be circulated for public comment in very early 2009 and will be heard by both the Expo Construction Authority Board and the Metropolitan Transit Authority, likely in March. After that, the Authorities will be required to respond to all comments raised by stakeholders and to finalize the EIR which should be completed by fall 2009.

Chief among the decisions to be determined by public input and the boards is the route the light rail will take. From the Phase 2 starting point at Venice and Robertson, the route could travel west along Exposition on existing Metro right-of-way to Santa Monica. The alternative would head west along Venice Boulevard, then north along Sepulveda, where it would join the right-of-way at Exposition. In the City of Santa Monica, the route will either go down Colorado or Olympic. Major decisions to be made. I look forward to a comprehensive airing of the options and ample hearings so the communities in and around Santa Monica will have the opportunity to voice their concerns and support.

EXPO PHASE 2 FACTS

- *From Culver City to 4th Street in Santa Monica, the line will be from 6.9 miles to 7.8 miles, depending on route.*
- *There will be 7 or 8 stations along the route.*
- *Cost is estimated to be \$1.3 billion for the right-of-way alignment or \$2 billion for the longer Venice/Sepulveda alignment.*
- *Ridership is anticipated to reach over 60,000 boardings per day by 2030.*
- *Estimated travel time from downtown Los Angeles to Fourth Street in Santa Monica will be 44 to 50 minutes, depending on route.*

I congratulate the visionary decision the voters of Los Angeles County have made by their support of this important source of transportation funding in the County. This investment in infrastructure will address regional needs long left behind, and bring our systems in line with other world-class metropolitan areas. Let's get L.A. moving!

Amicus Curiae Briefs Submitted

Amicus curiae is a legal filing by someone who is not a party to the litigation, but who believes that the court's decision may affect his or her interest. Although it is not commonplace for legislators to become amici, I had the unusual opportunity to do so twice this year in just two months in cases pending before the U.S. and California Supreme Courts.

• U.S. Navy Sonar activities

The first was in September and involved activities by the U.S. Navy operating off the coast of the 41st AD that used mid-frequency active sonar that its own Environmental Assessment found would result in approximately 170,000 "takes." These "takes" include such things as hearing loss, panic, and deaths of protected marine species like migrating whales and marine mammals.

I introduced and passed a formal Resolution of the California State Assembly this summer to the President and the Navy, asking them "to abide by the laws governing usage and effects upon the coastal regions of California and adopt the guidelines presented by the California Coastal Commission." The Navy refused, and filed an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, seeking the right to override California's laws and regulations. State Senator Christine Kehoe and I filed an amicus brief in connection with that appeal, citing the action taken by the State Assembly. To my great disappointment, however, on a 5-4 vote, the U.S. Supreme Court found in favor of the Navy, in spite of reasonable alternatives being available to them that would have allowed them to conduct their exercises. I hope that the Navy will voluntarily take all steps possible to protect the marine life around them in the performance of their operations.

• **Proposition 8 – Ban on Same Sex Marriage**

Although opinions have been sharply divided on this issue over the years, in this past legislative session Assembly Bill 43 was passed and signed in law by Governor Schwarzenegger. It gave same-sex couples the legal ability to marry as a fundamental right. When challenged, the California Supreme Court upheld AB 43. Opponents then placed a ban on same-sex marriage on the November 4 ballot, which the voters narrowly passed. The validity of this ban is now back before the California Supreme Court.

I was proud to join with 40 other members of the California State Legislature in submitting an amicus curiae letter to the Supreme Court Justices, objecting to taking away the right that same-sex couples currently have to marry the person of their choice.

In relevant part, that letter summarizes:

"Assembly Bill 43 recognized the importance of the institution of civil marriage in promoting stable relationships and protecting the civil rights of individuals in those relationships, as well as their children or dependents and members of their extended families. By eliminating gender-specific language limiting marriage to a civil contract between a man and a woman, Assembly Bill 43 intended to extend to same-sex couple the fundamental right of marriage. Simply put, it sought to 'end the pernicious practice of marriage discrimination in California'."

The amicus letter argues the language of the California Constitution that a person "may not be ... denied equal protection of the laws" and a "citizen or class of citizens may not be granted privileges or immunities not granted on the same terms to all citizens." Oral arguments have been made. The Court is estimated to rule some time in early spring of 2009.

Out and About in the District

• **Day of the Child**

I had the wonderful opportunity on November 9 to welcome over 1,000 foster children and their mentors to Santa Monica. The Day of the Child is designed to bring awareness and support to the needs of children who, by no fault of their own, are living in and out of home care. This Day takes thousands of high-risk children from foster homes, residential facilities, and homeless shelters for a day of fun, games, rides and love, with volunteer mentors. At the end of the day, each child receives care packages, including books, educational materials, and everyday necessities, all donated by generous community groups and businesses. It was a joy to welcome the group that was beginning their day on the iconic Santa Monica Pier in my hometown.

Day of the Child is a creation of Children Uniting Nations, founded by Daphna Ziman, and having the support of countless elected officials and celebrity volunteers, including Pierce Brosnan, Sela Ward, Jennifer Love, Jane Seymour, Stevie Wonder, N'sync's J.C. Chazez, former Governor Gray Davis, and too many more to name. I was honored to be joined by Assembly Speaker Karen Bass and Board of Equalization Member Judy Chu at the event.

• Coastal Cleanup Day Targets Plastic Bags

On September 20, I participated in the Clean Seas Coalition's press conference on the Santa Monica beach. Also in attendance were Lt. Governor John Garamendi and some very unwelcome "bag monsters."



So what's the big problem with flimsy single-use plastic bags? Here are just a few facts. U.S. consumers use 100 billion plastic bags annually, which is the energy equivalent of 12 million barrels of oil. Marine life, including marine mammals like whales and dolphins, ingest floating bags they mistake for food, which sicken and kill them. Californians yearly use about 552 bags per person. This usage generates 147,038 tons of unnecessary waste — enough to stretch around the globe over 250 times. California needs to take the lead in phasing out these environmental hazards in favor of reusable and environmentally-safe cloth bags.

On December 12, I introduced AB 68. It will prohibit stores from providing a single-use carryout bag to a customer unless the store charges a fee of not less than 25¢ per bag at checkout. Money generated from these fees would then be used for grants to cities and counties for programs related to reducing use of these bags.

(818) Constituents Get New Area Code

To insure a continuing supply of telephone numbers, a new area code (747) is being added to the area now served by 818. In the 41st AD, this includes Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Woodland Hills, Tarzana, Encino, and Sherman Oaks. It is already in effect, and (818) customers should begin using the new dialing procedure now. All calls in the (818) area code that are currently dialed with seven digits should be dialed using 1 + area code + telephone number. Just the seven digits will work only until April 18, 2009.

HOWEVER, after April 18, 2009 if you do not use the new dialing procedure, your call will not be completed and a recording will instruct you to hang up and dial again. We should all be using the next several months to get used to the new system. Automatic dialing equipment or other systems that are programmed with a seven-digit (818) number like fax machines, speed dialers, etc. will need to be reprogrammed to use the new dialing procedure.

Most of all ...

... thank you for the immense privilege of being able to represent you in the 41st Assembly District for the past two years. The challenges that we face in Sacramento are considerable, but it has been gratifying to be a part of the work to protect vital services during these economically difficult times. I'm also looking ahead proactively to get policies and reforms in place for the longer term, knowing that our state will most certainly rebound. We want to be ready.

Please also, as we move into the holiday season, remember those in need. There are emergency homeless shelters and food banks all around the district that are in serious need of donations of nonperishable food, warm clothing, a few volunteer hours, and cash contributions. Your local animal shelter will welcome your gifts of pet food and soft old rugs or blankets to provide comfort to the animals in their care.

I wish each and every one of you a wonderful holiday season filled with joy and great hope for the future, both here in California and for our country. It has been a very difficult year, with our economy precipitously falling into a recession, but also a jubilant year with the watershed win of our new President! Overall, I think we have much to be grateful for.

Enjoy your time with family, friends and loved ones,

Julia

Committee and Legislative Appointments

**Chair, Assembly Education Committee
Assembly Budget Committee**

**Legislative Liaison, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission
Legislative Participant, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
California Commission on the Status of Women**

HOW TO REACH ME:

District Office:

6355 Topanga Canyon Blvd., Suite 205
Woodland Hills, CA 91367
Phones: (818) 596-4141 . (805) 644-4141 . (310) 395-3414
Fax: (818) 596-4150

Capitol Office:

State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0041
Phone: (916) 319-2041
Fax: (916) 319-2141

democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a41/ or www.assembly.ca.gov